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### My South

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### III. My South

Say that you're a good woman, and a child  
 comes to your house. It's a small house, tidy,  
 just like its neighbors, and you're just like  
 your neighbors, too: tidy, generous, polite.  
 No witch lives here. There's no rope, no hood, no knife.  
 But now you see your house through the child's eyes.  
 Maybe you've taken one step, or two, to the side  
 of your neighbors, but we're not talking insight;  
 maybe you're Christian, but we're not talking wise.  
 You look at your house, and you think "No child  
 will learn exclusion at my table," or, "This child  
 will learn open-heartedness from my honest smile."  
 The moment comes when you must change your life,  
 but how will you know when you have changed enough?  
 I look at the past, and I see what you see.  
 I too can say "this will not suffice,  
 this domestic compromise, this domestic lie."  
 I see the limitation—because they showed me.  
 So here is your assignment: list out  
 everything you want that child to learn,  
 today, tomorrow—all the ways you can  
 imagine for these women to be good.  
 You'll have to hurry with your answers.  
 Already the biscuits are cooling; ham fat  
 thickens in white ribbons over the string beans;  
 already melting ice begins to water  
 the sweetened undercurrents of the tea.  
 Hurry. Lunch is on the table. It is 1953.

—Nathalie F. Anderson